If evidence has been collected, would the hon. Minister be kind enough to tell us? Sir, I really did not want to irritate him. But he is getting excited. Perhaps, he did not follow correctly what I said.

SHRI PRANAB KUMAR MUKHERJEE: It is not a question of irritation. If at every stage of investigation I come and say that this is the information available, then, it will be public.

SHRIMATI MAIMOONA SULTAN: I said, the investigation is taking too long.

SHRI PRANAB KUMAR MUKHERJEE: This is not the first time. I have said it a number of times that we can give information only in general terms. I cannot say how much foreign exchange I have got, what type of documents I have seized and what is the result of the scrutiny. Unless we come to certain definite coclusions, it is not possible. (Interruption).

MR. CHAIRMAN: You cannot give information about the investigation from hour to hour.

*329. [*The questions (Shri Hukmdeo Narayan Yadav) was absent. For answer,* vide Col 34-35]

Racket in traveller's cheques issued under the foreign travel scheme

*330. SHRI J. P. GOYAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that ingenious racket in traveller's cheques issued under the Foreign Travel Scheme involving a staggering amount of Rs. 100 crores in foreign exchange has been busted by the Directorate of Enforcement, Southern Zone;

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard;

(c) what is the number of travel agents who have so far been arrested for their involvement in the fraud and what are their particulars;

(d) what action has been taken against them and other persons involved therein; and

(e) what measures are proposed to be taken to ensure that such fraud does not take place in future?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI PRANAB KUMAR MUKHERJEE): (a) to (e) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

On the basis of information received, the Enforcement Directorate (Foreign Exchange Regulation Act) conducted searches at certain premises in Madras on 11th June, 1984. As a result, certain malpractices relating to release of foreign exchange under the Foreign Travel Scheme/Neighbourhood. Travel Scheme hav come to notice. In this connection the Enforcement Directorate has arrested 3 persons, including one person who is the Managing Director of a Travel Agency. The arrested persons have been released on bail by the court. Investigations by the Enforcement Directorate in this respect are continuing and the amount involved will be known only on completion thereof.

Appropriate action under the law against the persons found involved and remedial measures as may be found necessary will be taken on completion of the investigations.

SHRI J. P. GOYAL: Sir, I have seen reports from Madras that this racket in passports and travellers' cheques has resulted in a loss of about Rs. 100 cores in foreign exchange. Therefore, the question is, what remedial measures the Government is taking? This should be disclosed by the hon. Minister.

SHRI PRANAB KUMAR MUKHERJEE: Sir, in the statement itself, I have said that on 11th June, 1984, we have searched the premises and we have also arrested the Managing Director of a travel agency. As I mentioned in reply to the earlier question, investigations are still in progress and when I arrive at a definite conclusion I will give the same to the

House and to the hon. Member if he wants it.

SHRI R. RAMAKRISHNAN: Mr. Chairman, Sir, in the travellers' cheques racket which has now been disclosed and for which remedial action has been taken, many of these travellers' cheques were found unsigned by those who had applied for the foreign exchange. The normal procedure is that there are two signatures. One should be signed in the presence of the issuing authority and the other at the second place when you encash the travellers' cheque. I would like to know if the Finance Minister proposes to take any action against those travel agents who are having authorised licences to issue these cheques, whether any action will be taken against them. Secondly, to avert such things in future what specific action will the Finance Ministry take in terms of giving directions to see that this does not happen?

SHRI PRANAB KUMAR MUKHERJEE: I do agree with the hon. Member that some cases like this have come to our notice. When we find that they have indulged in this type of irregularities, we cancel their licence. Apart from this other penal actions are also being taken. It is quite disturbing that of late some more cases have come to our notice and I have already instructed the concerned department to be more vigilant and to ensure that this type of occurrences do not take place.

Operation of Indian Airlines flights in Coimbatore

*331. SHRI T. THANGABALU: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Indian Airlines are operating their flights in Coimbatore from Sulur Defence Air Strip instead of Peelamedu Civil Air Strip;

(b) for how long this arrangement will continue;

(c) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration to expand Peelamedu Civil Air Strip in the near future; and

(d) if so, what are the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI KHURSHEED ALAM KHAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The existing arrangements will continue till the runway at Peelamedu airport is strengthened and extended to make it suitable for receiving Boeing 737 aircraft. The terminal building will also require to be suitably extended and modified to meet the requirements of B-737 aircraft.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) The existing runway which is 4,400 ft. in length is propsed to be extended to 6000 ft. and strengthened from LCN 10 to LCN 40. Land acquisition proceedings for the extension of the runway have been completed and possession of land was taken on 10th July, 1984. The cost of the land is Rs. 18.85 lakhs. Preparation of drawings and estimates has started. A token provision for the development of the airport has been made in the current year's budget. The major part of the work will be undertaken in the 7th Plan period.

SHRI T. THANGABLU: Sir, the hon. Minister has stated thtat a token provision for the development of the airport has been made in the current year's budget The reply is very evasive. He has not mentioned the exact amount. Secondly, the hon. Minister has stated that the major part of the work will be undertaken in the Seventh Plan period. Here also the exact date is not mentioned. The Seventh Plan starts from 1985 and goes on to 1990. Coimbatore is an important industrial city and the people of Coimbatore as wel as the people of Tamil Nadu are totally ignored by the Ministry, I can say that. The hon. Minister may kindly state when exactly the work will be completed.

SHRI KHURSHEED ALAM KHAN: Sir, in the first place, I would like to mention that the answer is quite definite and specific. As far as the token provision